

14 February 2006

Plants Recognized for Waste Reduction

Two 3M plants receive awards from the state of California for their waste reduction activities

At a Glance

The 3M Petaluma and the 3M Monrovia, Calif., plants won 2005 Waste Reduction Awards from California's Integrated Waste Management Board – the state's leading waste reduction authority.

Although they are separated by 500 miles and manufacture very different products, the 3M Monrovia (Unitek) and the 3M Petaluma, Calif., plants have much in common. Both have received multiple awards that speak volumes about their employees' dedication to environmental excellence and continuous improvement.

3M Monrovia received the Waste Reduction Award from California's Integrated Waste Management Board in 2005 for the fifth consecutive year. The plant, which manufactures 3M Unitek orthodontic products, recycles more than two-thirds of its waste.

3M Petaluma received the 2005 Waste Reduction Award for recycling 71 tons of material that otherwise might have been put into a landfill or incinerated. This was the fourth time that the plant received this award. The plant's employees manufacture 3M™ Privacy Computer Filters, Vikuiti™ eXtended Resolution Video Screens, 3M™ Vanguard™ Window Lenses, 3M™ Press-On™ Optics and more.



In addition, both 3M Petaluma and 3M Monrovia are members of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Environmental Performance Track program. Performance Track is a voluntary partnership between the federal government and public and private businesses. Performance Track facilities are recognized as environmental leaders.

Across-the-board employee buy-in

One key to the plants' environmental success is the active involvement of all employees. Both plants have raised awareness among employees by giving recycling activities greater visibility and by recognizing employee efforts.

"We have very dedicated employees, and an Environmental, Health and Safety [EHS] committee that oversees our waste reduction efforts," said Paula Vandale, plant manager, 3M Petaluma. "Everyone's engaged in EHS activities, and all shifts and areas in the plant are represented on the committee."

Waste reduction activities at 3M Petaluma include diverting waste from landfills by reusing packaging, using bulk containers and reusable containers, and returning collapsible packaging materials to vendors for reuse. The plant also recycles office paper waste, cardboard, paper, plastic and waste byproducts, and purchases recycled paper.

Both plants exceed 2005 goals

Both 3M plants exceeded corporate Environmental Targets 2005, which called for reducing waste by 25 percent and energy use by 20 percent last year.

3M Petaluma employees are proactive in identifying waste reduction opportunities and in submitting EHS and productivity suggestions. Because of the strong support from plant management for their waste-reduction efforts, employees feel empowered to try innovative solutions.

"We've used Six Sigma methodology to find waste reduction opportunities," said Ade Babatunde, EHS engineer, 3M Petaluma. "Our hourly workers from different departments provide good ideas and identify recycling opportunities."

Reduce, reuse, recycle

3M Monrovia, too, relies on employee training and awareness about what can be recycled or reused. A variety of communications on waste reduction efforts provide feedback that keeps employees informed about their environmental performance.

"We have a lot of strong programs for recycling waste, and we're also fortunate that metal waste is readily recyclable," said Tom Herriges, plant manager, 3M Monrovia. "We keep a sharp focus on managing our waste and we've reduced waste each year."

Recycling rates at 3M Monrovia have continued to increase from year to year. In the last year, the plant's recycling rates increased in the following categories: cardboard (93 percent), white paper (17 percent), plastic scrap molding (12 percent) and scrap metal (2 percent). For the reporting period, 3M Monrovia recycled more than 778 tons of material.

Where possible, warehouse employees also collect and reuse butcher paper and bubble wrap that comes in site deliveries for use in product shipments. This reduces the site's shipping material costs and the amount of waste generated in the warehouse. The site also returns more than 90 percent of the barrels it receives to their various suppliers for reuse.

Sharing best practices

Both 3M Petaluma and 3M Monrovia benefit from collaboration among the network of 3M's California facilities. Since all the facilities are operating under the same state environmental regulations, they are all on the same page when it comes to sharing information and can benefit from each others' best practices.

3M Petaluma, which serves the Optical Systems Division, also benefits from that division's very proactive EHS roundtable. Representatives from seven Optical Systems facilities meet for several days twice each year to hear from speakers and share best practices.

"A lot of what we do isn't rocket science. It's taking the everyday materials we generate and finding vendors that are willing to work with us on recycling endeavors," said Jon Hanson, senior EHS engineer, 3M Monrovia. "We can always do better, but we work pretty hard at it."

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